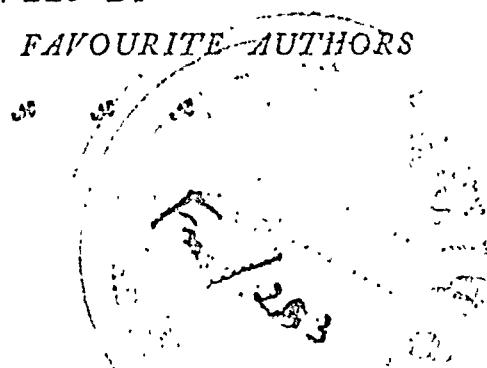




*LITTLE NOVELS BY
FAVOURITE AUTHORS*



The Duke of Cameron Avenue

HENRY KITCHELL WEBSTER



The Duke of Cameron Avenue

BY

HENRY KITCHELL WEBSTER

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OF "CALUMET 'K,'" ETC.



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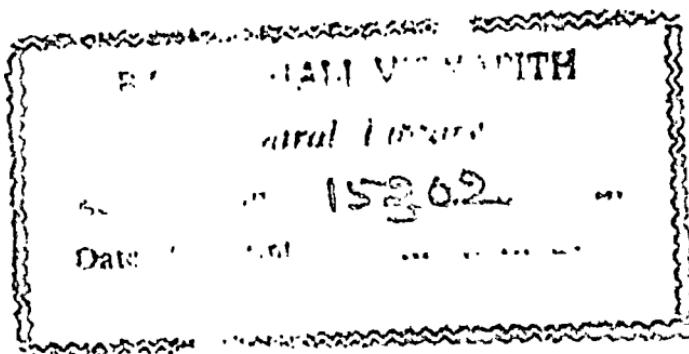
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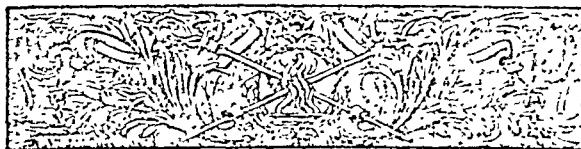
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THE DUKE OF CAM- ERON AVENUE

CHAPTER I



HE fifth annual meeting of the Carter Hall Association was nearly over, and most of the twenty associates and Douglas Ramsay, the warden, were glad of it. The dinner which had preceded it had been long, Ramsay's report, though cut as close to the bone as he knew how to cut it, had not been short, and the retiring president had fairly surpassed himself. But when the new president's turn came, he said that if they would take his speech for granted, he would give his time to Mr. Ramsay. He believed that

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Mr. Ramsay wanted an additional appropriation to the one which covered his regular budget, and would now explain what he wanted it for.

This, being unexpected, was more interesting, and they all turned a little to see what was coming. Ramsay drew his chair closer to the table, and hunched forward. He was rather a raw-boned young man somewhere in the early thirties. His features were not finely modelled; his hands were big and knotted, and he gesticulated so violently with them that his coat-sleeves worked far back from his wrists; his voice was rough in timbre, and the range of his inflections amazing. He worked hard, he talked hard, he used hard words, he even smiled hard. But for all that he was not unamiable, nor underbred, nor awkward, nor even ill-looking. What the mitigating quality about him was, one did not at first discover. It would seem absurd to call so outspoken, hard-hitting a man tactful, but for three years

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he had worked in unbroken harmony with the Carter Hall Association, and his various predecessors could assure you of the weight of that fact as evidence.

“If you listened to my report just now, you know better than I shall know myself to-morrow morning, what we have been doing, how many babies there have been on the average in the day nursery, how many boys in the sloyd classes, and so on. So far as we’re concerned, we’ve had a good year. We’ve made a good showing. How much we’ve accomplished for the ward in that time, I don’t know. After the compliments Mr. Payne has been giving me, I guess I dare own up that I don’t know what it is that we’re trying to accomplish.”

“Surely you don’t mean that, Mr. Ramsay.” It was a white-haired but fresh-complexioned woman who interrupted him, and she spoke as though reading out of a paper before a club, “Isn’t it to give those poor people a

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glimpse of the higher life and to help them to attain it for themselves?" There was a slight, indefinable stir all about the table at that. It quickened galvanically at Ramsay's reply.

"No doubt, no doubt, but what does that mean? How are we going to translate it into terms that will guide our actions?

"In the last typhoid epidemic," he went on hastily, "our ward, with one-thirty-sixth of the population of the city, had one-quarter of the cases,— nine times too many,— and I was not surprised, for I knew what the sanitary conditions were before it happened. In the tenements and brothels south of Cameron Avenue, they're at the worst, but they're nasty enough up in our part of the ward. I'll not go into details unless you want me to. That was the first investigation I made on coming to Carter Hall, and when I saw how things stood I began trying to have them bettered. I wrote letters to the news-

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papers, and after I'd compared notes with Robertson and Holmes on their wards we began to try what we could to get a reasonably good housing and sanitary bill through the council. We stopped pretty soon because we saw that we were trying something about as possible as washing up a dirt road. The man who stood in our way was the chairman of the housing committee. He holds that place for the purpose of preventing any such bill as we wanted, and he is Alderman Albert Gollans of our ward—a newspaper the other day called him the Duke of Cameron Avenue.

“That's not a joke,” he went on, raising his voice above the rustle of a polite laughter. “It's a scientific, historical, precise”—and at every word his big hand made the glasses jump—“designation of him. He levies tribute and grants protection. He holds the ward, or a great part of it, in a strictly feudal relation.”

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He leaned farther forward, and began to talk rapidly. "As I said, I know a lot less than I did three years ago. I'm not near so sure what altruism means, nor improvement of economic conditions. I used to like to lecture on sociology, as they call it. I wouldn't do it now for a hundred dollars. But I do know something about the ward and the people in it and the way they live. And I know that if Carter Hall can cleanse the Augean stables, I mean literally, if it can compel the landlords by law to fill up the vaults and flush the pipes and give the people air to breathe, if it never does anything else, it will have justified its existence."

His voice, when he said it, had been clang ing in their ears like a big bell, but now he checked himself suddenly. He leaned back in his chair, and wiped his red forehead with a handkerchief. Then he said quietly, "What I ask of you is an appropriation of two thousand

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dollars to play politics with. I want to tip Al Gollans out of his chair."

It was ex-president Payne who broke the silence which followed. The shower of heresies had thrown his thoughts into some confusion. "Our policy has always been opposed to that, Mr. Ramsay. We have regarded our work as something quite outside of politics. We want to elevate the masses by — by the leaven of culture and — "

"Don't you want to think," put in another man, "what the consequence of a defeat would be to the settlement, before you embark on such an enterprise? Would not a defeat be a serious, a fatal, blow to our influence? And is not such a conclusion quite possible?"

"I can't promise a victory," said Ramsay, "and I think a defeat would no doubt impair our usefulness for a time." Suddenly he thrust his body forward. "You've been building a ship," he said. "You've spent five years at it. We don't know the sea,

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except that it's stormy, and our ship may come to grief in it, but it's better to lose a spar or two than never to have tried at all. If we can ride it out, we've won a victory for the whole city as well as for ourselves, and perhaps, if the example of success is worth anything, for other cities.

“I’m not asking you to go on a wild goose chase, either. I’ve canvassed the ward very carefully, and I think we stand a very good chance to win. I can turn our men’s club into a machine of our own in half an hour. They’re eager for something like that. We can carry the six precincts north of Cameron Avenue and west of A Street. That’s as certain as human certainty can be.”

“I don’t know what Mr. Ramsay means, but I’m sure—at least, I hope—he doesn’t intend to express approval of machine politics, and certainly not to adopt them himself.” The speaker was a deep-voiced woman in a black gown. Her name was Ficklin.

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"I should say it depends on the machine," said Ramsay. "I can imagine a good machine. I even think I could build one."

But the deep voice went on. "We founded Carter Hall for the purpose of presenting an example, an ideal, to the poor and degraded. And rather than that we should, by our example, sanction political barter and bargaining or sully the ideal of civic purity by our actions, I would undergo fifty defeats. I should consider a victory as the only disaster."

A young lawyer named Dallas spoke up quickly. "You don't agree with Abraham Lincoln, then, Mrs. Ficklin? You know he said that good statesmanship was using individual meanness for the public good."

Ramsay grinned across the table at him. "Did he?" he asked.

"Oh, I'm perfectly capable of adding what I can to the Lincoln myth upon occasion," rejoined Dallas, "but I couldn't make up anything as good as

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that. That's according to Hay." Then, with hardly a pause, he went on, "Tell us some more about our chance to win, Ramsay."

The warden made no reply for a moment, but eyed the wineglass which he spun between his fingers. When he did speak, it was to Mrs. Ficklin.

"I'm glad you've brought up the subject," he said, "because it's important that we should all understand each other on that point before we go any farther. I agree with you that one should take high ideals into settlement work, and that if one succeeds, his neighbours become aware of those ideals. Perhaps that's the measure of his success."

He was hesitating over his words, feeling for them rather cautiously, and there were many pauses in his speech. "But ideals aren't a matter of externals. You can't consciously present one. You can't exhibit an immaculate ideal as you'd wear a clean collar. If you do, it will soon grow rather dingy. If you

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keep it where it belongs, why, contact with facts, even grimy facts, won't soil it.

"That's theorising, and a little out of my line," he went on, and now his voice rose, and his fist thumped out his periods on the table. "But here is what I want to say. We won't mince matters. I'll not go into politics unless you tell me to. But if I do go in, it will be practical politics. I won't deal in pure abstractions on Cameron Avenue any more than I'd talk in pure Urdu. I'll take high ground when I can, but lower ground in default of it. I'll appeal to anything that will help me win, and that isn't dishonest. And I don't call it dishonest to get one man to admire the view, and to show another that the situation is healthy, and to point out to a third that the soil is good for potatoes. Before I go in you must decide whether you can trust me with a free hand. I must do it my own way. I shall, no doubt, do a few things, and be said to do a good many more, which some

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of you will think are wrong. When it's all over, I'll tell you the whole story, and you can judge whether it's been a hard fight and a fair fight or not. It will be too late then, of course, to mend matters, and so I say again that now is the time to make your decision.

"And just this much more. If I'm whipped, it will, as I said, impair the influence of Carter Hall for a while. But I won't embarrass you by staying where I am after I have outlived my usefulness. I'm going in with my eyes open. I shall play myself against the Duke of Cameron Avenue, and if I fail, I'll take the medicine that the leader of an insurrection usually gets.

"I've made my speech wrong end to. I don't want you to think about the consequences to me nor even to Carter Hall. I want you to remember how poor and helpless those people are and how they died. That disease doesn't take the sickly ones, those who haven't much chance anyway. It attacks the

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strong men who are carrying them, the men and women who earn the cabbage and the corn-meal and the baskets of coal. I could show you a map with the death spots all over it, but I didn't bring it because I don't want you to think of it in percentages. If this association means anything, it means that those people are your neighbours ; that Peter Slavinski, who died of fever, who had ambitions and ideals as good as yours and mine, who loved his children as you do, was your neighbour, and that his family who are pitifully trying to get on without him are your neighbours, too." There was a pause, and then, "That's all," he said. "Thank you for listening so long."

There was a long silence. The twenty associates were not looking at the warden nor at each other. At last somebody said, "I move that the appropriation be made ;" and with a palpable flutter of relief it was done. "Thank you," said Ramsay, quietly. By common consent the meeting was over.



CHAPTER II

RAMSAY walked downtown, and before taking the car out to the settlement he dropped into a little café where they raised no objection to his pipe, and sat down to a hot scotch and a half-hour of solitary reflection. Solitude was a luxury not often to be enjoyed by the warden of Carter Hall. For a while he dismissed Alderman Gollans and the plans for the insurrection he meant to lead against him from his mind and took up another less important but not uninteresting matter.

Just after the meeting had broken up, and as he was leaving the room, the youngest and newest of the twenty associates had accosted him and asked

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whether he could take in another resident at Carter Hall. "Because if you can," she said, "I'd like to be that one." He had told her that he could not answer offhand. The Hall was supposed to be full, but it might be possible for him to manage it. He would let her know next day.

Thanks to a late uncle, Anne Coleridge had quite in her own hands a much larger income than she could spend, and as the preoccupation of both her parents in affairs of their own left her as much to herself and as free to do as she pleased as a girl in her position in society could be, the wonder was, when you came to think of it, that she had not "gone in for philanthropy" before. What little he knew of her Ramsay liked. He liked the humorous droop of her mouth he had seen when Mrs. Carpenter had begun her well-known dissertation on giving the poor a glimpse of the higher life; when he had said he would let her know next

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day whether he could make room for her at the Hall or not, he liked the flicker he caught in her eyes, which told him that she knew why he hesitated and that she did not take it amiss.

But still he was not sure he wanted her at the Hall. Ramsay knew two sorts of women residents, the earnest and the gracious. One or two precious jewels in his experience had been both, but that only proved the rule, and to preserve anything like a just proportion between those classes was rather a nice matter. There was no doubt where Miss Coleridge belonged. She possessed a charm even beyond that of most women of her birth and breeding, and he knew that none would more infallibly perceive it nor be more amenable to it than his neighbours in the ward. But how she would affect the balance of his family in the Hall was another matter. He knew she could sing. He had heard her do it, and play her own accompaniment in what the people who

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knew said was a really musicianly way, so he was sure she was capable of helping out Miss Enderby, but he didn't know whether she would or not, nor whether Miss Enderby would relish it if she did.

His inclination was so strongly one way that he resisted it for a while, but soon he yielded. "She'll keep us out of the sociological rut," he reflected, "and won't it be a recreation, though, to see the way she'll dress for dinner!" Then a little regretfully he put her out of mind, and turned his attentions to a more important, but less beautiful, object, the chairman of the housing and tenement committee, Alderman Albert Gollans.

He had not been thinking of him three minutes when the man himself walked into the café, escorting a couple of gaudily dressed women. He wore a dress suit, patent leather boots which betrayed the fact that they were too small for him, three diamond studs in

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his shirt, and a derby hat. His closely cropped mustache was of the bristly, aggressive sort, but his hair, under some mollifying influence or other, submitted to be plastered tight to his head, and shone with positive brilliance. He carried his overcoat on his arm.

Ramsay watched them to a table, then knocked the ashes out of his pipe and finished his glass. Just as he put it down Gollans recognised him and came over to where he sat.

“Won’t you join us, Mr. Ramsay ? ” he said as they shook hands. “I guess you don’t know Mrs. Gollans.”

“I’m just going,” said Ramsay, rising. “I’ve been out all the evening, and I’ve a lot to do yet to-night. Thank you, though.”

“I know you keep pretty busy.” The alderman smiled as he said it. “I understand your men’s club out at Carter Hall is bigger than ever this year. You haven’t asked me to come out and make them a speech for a long while.”

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They were walking together toward the door, and Ramsay stopped and faced him. He, too, was smiling, and he held out his hand. If the warden had ever been nice in the matter of hand-shaking, he was well over it.

"I invite you now," he said cordially. "Let's see. You're chairman of the council committee on housing and sanitary matters. Come out and make us a speech on tenement conditions in our ward. I'd like to hear it myself, and I think the rest would. Good night."

It was late when Ramsay reached the settlement, and he noted with satisfaction that Carter Hall appeared to be asleep, and that he should have his private office quite to himself. He sat down in his swivel chair, and unlocking a drawer took out two little bundles of memorandum slips, one indorsed "Independent," and the other, "Dr. Haver sham." He spread them out before him, keeping the two sorts distinct. The slips were covered with figures: additions,

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deductions, computations, totals, grand totals ; such as might appear to a schoolboy as some nightmare problem in arithmetic. Patiently he went over it, checking this, altering that, often consulting a card catalogue on his desk, or a filing cabinet at his right hand, or odd-looking maps, which he pulled up from an ingeniously contrived well at the back of his desk and buttoned over the edge of it. When he got to the end, he drew a long breath and shook his head. He locked up the slips indorsed "Dr. Haversham" in the drawer again ; the others he gathered into a bundle, tore them very fine, and dumped them into his waste-paper basket.

James Haversham, M.D., was perhaps within a year or two of Douglas Ramsay's age ; he was as good-looking as regular features, a pair of keen, intelligent eyes, and an athletic figure could make him. He had a light, dry, nicely inflected voice ; he could talk about a great many things, and gave

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evidence of having travelled and read rather widely. Altogether, he catalogued very well, and if you did not like him, it was hard to say why. The only thing you could put into words against him seemed to be that he was vain of his hands, and bestowed an inordinate amount of pains upon them.

The ward was not curious, and nobody asked or wondered why he had chosen to settle in Cameron Avenue, except, perhaps, one of the newer residents at Carter Hall, who nearly always sustained great surprise on first encountering him. About five years back he had taken the flat over the drug store on the corner of Cameron Avenue and B Street, and had hung out his shingle. His first step was the sagacious one of making friends with the police, and he did it so well that it was not long before most of the "emergency cases" in the neighbourhood—and there were a good many between Saturday noon and Monday morning—fell to his share. With that for a start,

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he rapidly accumulated a considerable practice of one sort or another. Fortunately it is not necessary to go farther into it than to say it paid him rather more than a living.

The doctor's chief aspirations were political. He had joined the precinct democratic club at the outset, and he was soon the most important member in it. At the next club election, with the true politician's instinct, he had refused the captaincy himself and secured the position for his chief rival in the club, and thereafter gave orders, when necessary, quietly, from behind the throne. It is enough to say that he knew how to make himself useful without making himself conspicuous. After two or three years the county chanced to go democratic, and Haversham's share in the victory was the office of county physician, and a modest amount of patronage in the way of sixty-day jobs, which do not fall under civil service rules — small matters, but enough

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to enable him to maintain himself as democratic boss of the ward. He was only minority boss, of course, for the ward and Gollans, with the city administration, were republican. He made it go as far as possible, and then went on as before, waiting for events to offer him another opportunity.

Dr. Haversham's curiosity was smartly aroused on the morning after the annual meeting of Carter Hall Association, when Ramsay called him up on the telephone and asked for an appointment with him. "If you can come out here to the Hall, I guess you'd better. If you can't, I'll come to your office," he said; and the doctor, wondering what could be in the wind, answered that he would stroll in about three that afternoon.

He did stroll into Ramsay's private office, just as Mrs. Ficklin, who lectured once a week on Browning to the Woman's Club, was coming out, and the coincidence made the warden's

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greeting of the democratic boss a little more spontaneous than it otherwise might have been.

“Who was she?” asked the doctor, as Ramsay closed the door. “I’ve seen her somewhere, or her picture.”

“Her picture is on the society page at least once a season, so you’ve probably seen it. She’s Mrs. Ficklin.”

“Oh,” said Haversham. The indifference in his tone was a bit overdone, and it provided Ramsay with a new idea.

The doctor sat down, and took a frankly comprehensive look about him. He had dined at Carter Hall once or twice, but had never been in here. “Do you know that this reminds me of Al Gollans’s office,” he said. “He goes in for this sort of thing.” A wave of his hand included the filing cabinets, card catalogues, maps, and other scientific paraphernalia. “He has regular office hours, and when a man goes to see him he makes him send in his name. It’s

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ten to one that he has his whole biography in his card catalogue, and then when the man comes in he knows all about him. I think he rather over-works the system, myself, though I must say he gets good results. Do you know him?"

"Yes, I know him pretty well. As for the system, it can be overworked, but still you can't do without it."

He pulled a map out over the desk, and motioned Haversham to draw up his chair. "This ought to interest a doctor," he said. "It shows the sanitation in the ward. I suppose you know a good deal about it?"

"I know it's rather primitive and very nasty. However, it don't bother the people out here. They're used to it, I suppose."

"They aren't so used to it that they don't die of it like flies," said Ramsay, gravely.

"Oh, yes; but you see, they're bound to do that anyway. They'll find some

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capital law of health to break. If it isn't one, it's another." He was looking at the map, however, with a rapidly growing interest. "This is immense," he said presently. "If we could only see what relation the deaths in the last epidemic had to the conditions—"

Another map with little yellow crosses strewn over it was under his eyes in an instant. He shook his head over it awhile, and then laughed shortly. "Well, that tells the story." And then, ruefully, "You don't often get a thing to work out as neatly as that. Cause and effect aren't as a rule so willing to be seen in each other's company. I congratulate you."

"No, thank you," said the warden, grimly. "It comes rather closer home than that. I don't mind telling you that I'm in earnest. It is my purpose to clear up that map, and some way or other I'm going to do it. I want a city statute to go on. Al Gollans, for reasons of his own, and no doubt they're



“HE WAS LOOKING AT THE MAP WITH A RAPIDLY GROWING
INTEREST.”

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good ones, means that I shan't get one. And as he's chairman of the housing and sanitary committee, I can't get my bill through him nor over him nor around him; so I'm going to try to throw him out. I'm going to try to beat him in the April election."

Though it was in the power of Mrs. Ficklin and some other worthy persons to prod him to growling, Ramsay was not a cynic. He took the highest ground he could. He knew facts enough out of Dr. Haversham's career to establish a strong presumption as to his character, but in the absence of certainty, he paid him the compliment of holding a high motive before him. If there was a spark of generosity, it should have been a breath of air, not a wet blanket.

But the doctor was puzzled. What was Ramsay driving at anyway? Where was the graft? Why talk to him about Gollans? He would give something to know the facts of the case. It would do no harm to hold back a little.

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“Oh,” he said. “Independent, anti-boss, purity-of-the-polls, turn-the-rascals-out, reform sort of thing, I suppose? Well, I don’t wonder that you settlement people try that on once in a while. But, frankly, Ramsay, you can’t make it go out here. That’s the truth.”

“I’ve no sneer for the crusader,” the warden answered thoughtfully. “He quickens the pulse, anyway. But this isn’t going to be a crusade. It’s to be practical politics. I didn’t ask you over here with nothing more substantial to offer you than Utopian fancies. It seems to me that for the present our interests lie the same way. You want Gollans out, yourself. But your democratic machine can’t do it; you’ve been trying for years. And my—call it reform if you like—I’m afraid couldn’t do it either. But together we should make a better job of it. Together, with luck, we could win.”

Haversham shrugged his shoulders. “We’d be glad to have you support our

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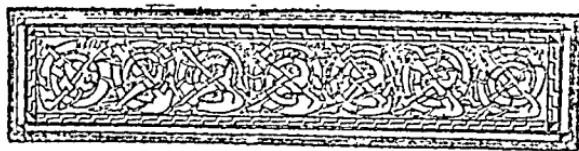
man, of course," he said. He was acting again, and again he rather overdid it. Ramsay laughed and shook his head. "It won't do, doctor. That's not what I propose."

"What you propose seems to be that I hand over the democratic machine to help push along your gaudy reform."

"I only want to borrow it." The warden's face became serious, and he began to speak more rapidly. "See here, Haversham. This is a matter of business. I'll show you what I can do. I think I can convince you that I can deliver the goods. If I can, we'll add together what we've got. If we've a chance to win, why there's a victory for your party—and a personal advantage for yourself."

Ramsay did not overdo it. The last half-dozen words of his speech had no laboured emphasis, nothing but the little hesitation which preceded them, but still they were significant.

"Go ahead," said the doctor. "If you'll show your hand, I'll show mine."



CHAPTER III

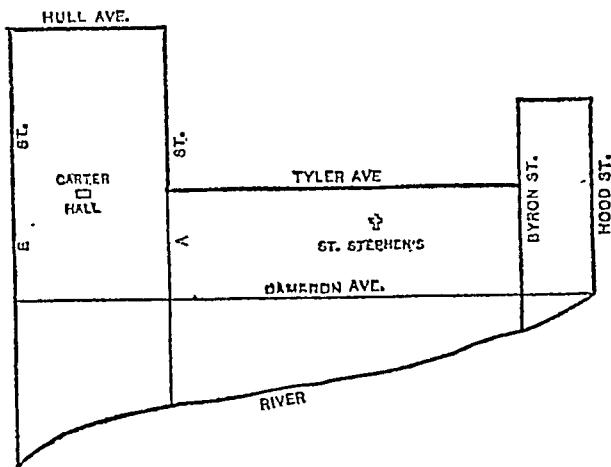
HERE was, of course, much to be taken for granted by each of them, and they plunged right into the midst of things.

There were many short cuts and perhaps as many roundabouts in their talking — for Haversham, from long contrary habit, found it difficult to keep his toe to the line. So, instead of trying to follow them, we will, by your leave, take a way of our own to reach an understanding, rough but tolerably accurate, of the situation they were discussing and the conclusion they finally came to.

The boundaries of the ward had not originally been arranged to give it the look of a headless animal lying on its back and sticking two very unequal legs straight into the air, though a first glance

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at the map might lead one to suppose so. The ward had been cut to fit a variety of exigencies, and Albert Gollans was by no means the only one whose convenience had been consulted. The first time he had tried to carry it, he had



THE WARD.

found himself, as he liked well in these latter days to recall, up against a pretty fierce proposition. The German vote, north of Cameron Avenue and between A and E streets, was of course republican, that is, his for the asking. The Italian

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quarter, between Byron and Hood streets, the hind leg of the animal, he kept in line, through the agency of an able lieutenant, at comparatively small expense, and gave it very little personal concern. The shoulder of the beast, between Cameron Avenue and the river, commonly known as the Frying-pan, was in the nature of things democratic, and after doing his best to have it included in the domain of his colleagues of the next ward, Gollans put up with it as well as he could and snowed it under as deep as possible at each election. It was here that Dr. Haversham had raised his standard.

Alderman Gollans made his fight and won his triumph in the centre. The body or waist of the ward was Polish. For squares and squares, tightly packed, this colony was practically undiluted by any foreign admixture. A few antediluvian Irish still held on forlornly, but every year saw fewer of them. The alderman's keen, strategical eye com-

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prehended that here the issue was to be decided, the question whether he was to be like the men who come and go, or like the brook which goes on forever. And so here he settled himself and concentrated his energies, here he brought to bear all the ingredients for success that he could muster. He was a little better educated than most ward bosses are, he had some tact and a tolerably pleasant address. In none of these particulars was he remarkable. But his energy was tireless and inexhaustible, his fidelity to his purposes and his promises unquestioned, and his knack for organising, for harmonising, for tying his strings and twitching his puppets about on the stage, without ever himself getting into the view of the audience, amounted to genius.

As might have been expected, he achieved this conquest of Poland exactly according to his plan. He did it so quietly that when his subjects found themselves aware of his rule, it seemed as though it had always existed. As

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they became accustomed to it, and as each successive campaign left him more strongly intrenched, his authority grew less unobtrusive though never irksome. He was frankly a personage by the time Ramsay was planning the attack upon him, remote, inaccessible. His favours were not cheap. When he went out among his people to their merrymakings and their funerals, which he did, to be sure, rather frequently, he did it, somehow, in the grand manner, like a countess opening a bazaar.

Strong and in undisputed authority as he knew himself to be, he was vaguely aware that he was not without a potential rival—potential only, for he and Father Lauth, as state and church should do, had pulled together and avoided trenching on each other's preserves. Father Lauth was not one of the officiating priests at St. Stephen's. It is hard to describe his functions better than to say that he was a sort of ecclesiastical general manager of the

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parish. All the secular affairs of the church, its schools, its clubs, its classes, its finances, composed his special province. The alderman knew that the priest commanded as good obedience and as much awe in one sphere as he himself did in another, but the fact did not trouble him. If a purely academic question could have interested him, he might have indulged in a lively speculation as to which way, in case it should come to a tug of war between himself and the priest, the rope would go.

All of this was perfectly understood, of course, between Ramsay and Haver sham, and went without saying. Ramsay's talk at first concerned itself entirely with the German colony between A and E streets — the fat foreleg of the ward in the middle of which Carter Hall was located. He pointed out that Gollans had hardly strung his wires nor laid his pipes in this section at all. He had always, as has been said, taken for granted that the German vote would be

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republican, and so far events had borne him out. Ramsay's belief and the effect of the evidence he presented was that on a strictly reform issue, an issue moreover which touched them very close home, he could, with the aid of the organization he had already perfected, swing this German vote into line and deliver it even to a democratic candidate.

"These people out here are a good lot. They're doing the best they can for themselves. They do more of their own thinking than most of the people over there on the boulevard. I should put the matter before them exactly as it looks to me. They read the *Globe* over here almost to a man, and I believe I can get Hunter to back me up. He's pretty independent, and I happen to know that he and Gollans have a score to settle when the time comes. I'd make a strictly high-class reform movement of it. Get the biggest people in the city to come out and make speeches to them, and all that sort of thing. I've a lot of

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confidence in my neighbours out here, and I think they've a good deal of confidence in Carter Hall."

That came as the conclusion of a long speech, minute, technical, clear-headed, but hotly in earnest. As Dr. Haver-sham had listened to it, the cynical incredulity which always stopped his ears against anything less sordid than barter melted, and, to his dismay, he found himself believing everything Ramsay said. In vain he tried to put up the barriers again, to force a smile behind his face, and to speculate where the warden's graft was coming in. He could not do it. The blazing integrity of the man would brook no denial. It compelled recognition.

"There's one thing, though," he said when Ramsay finished. "You won't swing them as solid as you could on the independent racket. They may see the force of all you say, but they'll hate like hell to walk over into the democratic camp."

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"I know it," said the warden. "This is the way I figure it out."

Haversham looked at the memorandum slip Ramsay handed him, and nodded thoughtful approval. "Well," he said slowly, "I believe you're right. I really believe you're right. Come, let's see how we stand. There's the Frying-pan. Lord bless us, we know what it'll do, and it won't need any mass-meetings either."

"This is about the way I figure it," said Ramsay, putting another slip of paper before him.

The doctor glanced at it and then at him in open surprise. "Seems to me you've got it down pretty fine for a reformer," he said. "Yes, that's about right. Conservative, though, if anything."

Then he went on. "Here's something that counts for us. Smith's department store that he's just opened on the avenue. Gollans pleaded with him not to do it. If we go down Cameron Avenue waving the Chicago platform of

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96 and yelling 'down with the trusts, I think we may carry it — though it is close to Gollans's dead-line. What do you think ?'

Ramsay nodded. "We pick up something there, anyway. I hadn't thought of that."

"How about the dagos down in the poet's corner ?"

"Say we break even."

"Even ! Why, Gollans owns them, lock, stock, and barrel."

"No, he don't. He's spent some money, and he's never been opposed. But I've a card up my sleeve for him. Those people are nearly all Neapolitans. I lived for a while down in southern Italy, and I feel pretty well acquainted with them. Carter Hall has been doing some work down there this year, and I've made some good friends among them."

"Can you talk Italian ?"

"They don't talk Italian — that is, not literary Italian. Yes, I can manage

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their talk pretty well. And I'm pretty sure we'll do well there. We'll break even, anyway."

Again Haversham believed, not only, this time, in the honesty, but in the judgment.

They footed up the totals. There was enough to justify a not entirely insane hope of winning, but they must admit they had figured it fine. The map of the ward was still opened out before them, and the doctor clapped his hands over the outlying parts of it, leaving little Poland alone in view.

"Look at it," he said. "There'll never be a Partition made there. It couldn't be scratched. You could just as well go up against Gibraltar with a pickaxe. We can do our best, and we may make him cough a little, but I'm afraid we'll never smoke him out of there."

"I don't know," said Ramsay. "I've some hopes from Father Lauth."

"Not in a thousand years. Gollans

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does about as much to support his parochial schools as all the rest of St. Stephen's parish together."

"Well, I don't count it in myself," said the warden, "but I mean to have a try at it."

Both men leaned back a little more easily in their chairs. Haversham lighted a cigar. "Well," he said presently, "for the sake of argument, say we win. The party gets a victory, and you get your tenement law. You said yourself this is to be practical politics. What do I get?"

He expected Ramsay to wince at that. Indeed he put it brutally, half in the hope of seeing him do so. But the warden went on quietly filling his pipe, and until he had it drawing comfortably he did not answer the question. When he did, it was with another one.

"What chance do you people think you have of putting in a democratic mayor a year from now? Pretty good, don't you?"

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"Yes," said Haversham. "It's as sure as anything so far off can be."

Ramsay nodded agreement. "And it'll be on a platform of righteous indignation and promises of an honest, businesslike, economical administration." He paused there. Then, "I don't see why you aren't the next health commissioner," he said.

Haversham was quick enough, and he needed no further hint. How perfectly logical, inevitable, it was! He, the young doctor who had done so much — more than any one else, it would be easy to say — to bring in the great sanitary reform, the doctor whose eloquent speeches everybody had read. What appointment would be more popular? And what a fitting reward it would be for the politician, who, after years of effort, had swung that impregnable republican ward into the democratic column! And last and best, how exactly it squared with his ambitions! He really had a pride in his profession,

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and here was a chance, without stepping out of the game of politics, to make a name for himself among his brothers in the profession, among the very men who now looked at him askance. It was perhaps a little triumph for the warden that for a moment, at least, James Haversham believed in himself.

“I’ll make a good one,” he said seriously. “You shan’t be ashamed of me. Come, let’s get to work.”



CHAPTER IV

GHERE was work enough to do. Busy men as they were, exacting as was the daily routine of each, yet somehow into every day they managed to crowd a long consultation over the campaign in which they were allied. It was a little surprising, even to themselves, that they got on so well together. They were as opposite as the poles, and though each knew approximately what to expect of the other in given circumstances, there was as little real understanding between them as there was sympathy or friendship. But they were willing to take each other for granted. Both had a faculty often denied to men of undoubted intelligence for keeping to the point in a discussion; they did not side-

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track easily nor irritate each other with argument which was outside the issue. They had for the moment a common object, and they brought into the talk nothing which had not that object in view. After they had separated, it was another matter. Haversham was likely to be more cynically pungent for an hour or two, and as for Ramsay, he felt like brushing his teeth. St. Paul's injunction to think on things that are pure and lovely and of good report often occurred to him, and he wished that after each of these consultations he might have time to do it for a while.

The selection of a candidate who, as nearly as possible, would meet all the somewhat contradictory requirements of the bill was their first problem, and it cost them a good many hours of canvassing to find him. When they first began talking about it, each was a little afraid that the other might be ambitious to head the ticket in person, but they

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were not long in coming to an understanding on that score.

“Let’s begin with ourselves,” said the warden. “I’d like to run, but that’s out of the question. Even if you could swing the democratic vote for me, which you couldn’t without a row, it wouldn’t do. I can ask the people around the Hall here to vote for a reform, but I can’t ask them to vote for me—or if I did, it wouldn’t do any good. How would you do?”

“I meant to try to break into the council this year,” said Haversham. “But on a reform movement I wouldn’t do at all. I’ve got what they call a record. Before I’d been nominated three days your people would have heard enough about me to queer any reform on earth.”

“I think you’re right. Though of course Gollans will say things about any one we put up.”

“But you see,” said Haversham, pleasantly, “in my case he could prove them true.”

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After the ground was thus cleared they went ahead less cautiously, but for a long time with no success. They were looking, as Ramsay pointed out, for a living paradox, for a member in good standing of the democratic machine, yet out of politics enough, independent enough, so that with the sugar-coating of a reform issue he would be a comparatively easy pill for the German republicans around Carter Hall to swallow. "The best we can do," said Ramsay, at last, "will be to look for a man who doesn't suit either of us." And it was in some such way that they came upon him.

"Do you know Schmeckenbecker?" Haversham asked, not very enthusiastically.

The warden laughed. "The fat little cigar-manufacturer down near your place on the corner? Yes, I know him, but—"

"That's just the way I feel about him, so maybe he'll do. Let's talk him over."

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They were both surprised to see how well he summed up. "And yet," said Ramsay, "I can't help wishing he was better. He's popular enough and inconspicuous and respectable and all right on the labour-union question, and he's no fool either. But I'm afraid he's something of a mule, wrong-headed and a puller."

"Oh, he's all of that. He'd give us our hands full. But the worst I've against him is his name, Schmeckenbecker. You laughed yourself when I mentioned it. It makes him a comedian in spite of himself. That's why he takes himself so seriously. Nobody else will. But that may not hurt him, after all."

"Will he run?" asked Ramsay.

"Will he!" said the doctor. He was drumming on the desk. "Schmeckenbecker, Schmeckenbecker," he was saying to himself. "Well, anyway, the republicans will have trouble making the German vote believe that he's an

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Irishman—or a Polack either." He turned a little in his chair, and his voice when he went on had a somewhat different quality. "You know the Germans hate the Poles like sin. It's queer they've voted together so long, when you come to think of it."

"Gollans isn't a Pole," said Ramsay.

"But he might very well be," rejoined the doctor, with a grin.

Ramsay never demanded any unnecessary explanations, and he let the doctor enjoy the joke by himself.

They threw the net a good many times after pulling up Schmeckenbecker, but they got nothing in the way of potential candidates that was nearly as good, so at last they decided that for better or for worse he was the man.

One day the warden, who had hardly more than seen him before, went down to Cameron Avenue for a good look at him. He found Schmeckenbecker in his steamy little shop, solemnly throwing dice with a clothing dealer from

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across the street. After this customer had gone, Ramsay bought half a dozen La Flor de Eugene V. Debs cigars for a quarter, lighted one, and, puffing comfortably away at it, fell into conversation with the proprietor. It may be said in passing that altogether that was not an easy thing to do, either as regarded the cigar or the maker of it. The cigar needs no description beyond that it was "honest union goods," but years of attendance at labour meetings had taught Ramsay to consume anything that would burn without the least discomfort. As to Schmeckenbecker, in spite of his farcical name and appearance, perhaps on account of them, as Haversham suggested, Ramsay found him inclined to be somewhat stiff with a comparative stranger.

But when he took his leave, half an hour later, he felt much better satisfied than he had done before. The man was clearly popular in the neighbourhood, in spite of his pomposity, which nobody

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seemed to take very seriously. He was very much in earnest about everything he said, and his tendency to oratory, to rolling, involute billows of speech, would not come amiss when he began stumping the ward. If he should take tenement reform as seriously as he took everything else, he would really do very well indeed.

That matter off his mind, there was but one thing more for him to bestir himself about until after the primary. All the business of getting Schmeckenbecker nominated by the democratic party was left, of course, to Haversham, and was undertaken and executed by him with the utmost nonchalance.

Ramsay's task was to enlist the *Evening Globe* newspaper in the support of their candidate. It was of critical importance that this should be accomplished, for, as the warden had said, practically every man of them in the German corner of the ward not only read the *Globe*, but thought pretty much according to its editorial page.

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Hunter, the editor and proprietor, was a good friend of Ramsay's, and he welcomed him warmly when the warden came into his office late one afternoon. "What are you doing out at Carter Hall these days? We haven't heard a word from you in a long while."

"You will hear enough of us pretty soon to make up for that," said Ramsay; and with that introduction he plunged into his story.

He was surprised and keenly disappointed to find that Hunter was anything but enthusiastic over his prospective campaign against Gollans. The deep frown and the strumming fingers gave small promise of the vigorous support which Ramsay had so confidently expected. Upon most men the effect of that kind of an audience is deadly; one loses heart, doubts one's own cause, conjures up swarms of objections and difficulties which never before had showed their heads. But to Ramsay, even in his disappointment, this unexpected, and as yet

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unspoken, hostility, was simply a spur. He had never told his story so clearly, had never pictured the conditions he was fighting so vividly, had never believed in his own cause so devoutly, as at this moment. He told everything ; the alliance with Haversham, the trade he had made with him, the selection of the fat little cigar-manufacturing candidate.

He gained some ground, — he compelled many a reluctant nod of assent from the man at the desk ; but, when all was said, he was still frowning thoughtfully.

“ I wish you had come to me before you lighted the fuse. This political blasting-powder business always makes trouble. Of course you’re right about your tenement bill. It ought to go through, and it’s outrageous that Gollans has blocked it. But if you’d come to us, we could have put the screws on Gollans and made him get out of the way.”

“ I don’t see yet what harm my explosion will do,” said Ramsay. “ But

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now tell me the truth. I've no doubt that now, rather than have the explosion, you'd get the Great Ones to put the screws on Gollans. But would you have done it before I'd lighted the fuse?"

Hunter said nothing, but his somewhat rueful smile made it unnecessary.

"I didn't know you were so tender of Gollans. And I've been reading editorials in the *Globe* for the last three years, too. But evidently I've left something essential out of my calculations. Do you mind telling me what it is?"

"Why, have you forgotten, my dear young friend, that old Uncle John's term in the Senate expires a year from next March, and that we're going to have the fight of our lives to send him back? Haven't you noticed that the Rubes up the state are getting everything ready to send one P. J. Jimpson, from somewhere out in the corn, in his place? Unless we can carry every state legislative district in the county, we're lost.

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Thunder! We're likely to be on the little end of the joint ballot altogether, and see a democrat go from this state to the United States Senate. And yet you can't see what harm it would do to turn in for all we are worth to swing a perfectly safe, solid republican district into the democratic camp."

"I know, of course," said Ramsay, with a sigh, "that you can't throw stones into a pond without making ripples. And I suppose throwing in as big a chunk as Al Gollans is will make quite a splash. But I don't see yet what harm the splash will do.

"Oh, I know," he went on, as Hunter moved to interrupt him. "I understand that old Uncle John is a nice, amiable old man, and it would be a pity to turn him out. He makes no trouble, and it isn't likely that he could get another job if he lost this one. I believe, for my part, though I'm no expert, that a mild cathartic, such as this spring campaign will be, would do the republican party

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in this county more good than harm, would help Uncle John rather than hurt him. But what does it matter?"

His voice rose and rang with a cry of anger in it. "Come out, man, with me, and have a look. Come out and see whether you don't think that the amount of Karl Marx's patent medicine they're taking out there isn't more dangerous even than one more fire-breathing, cloven-footed democrat in the very United States Senate. Come and see what chances the citizens will have that we're breeding there in the tenements, and what kind of citizens they'll make."

The sentence snapped off short, and there was a curious, electrical feeling in the silence that followed.

"Oh, the deuce take you reformers!" said Hunter. "Yes, I'll do what I can for you, though I don't promise how much it will be."



CHAPTER V

MISS COLERIDGE answered the note she received from Ramsay the morning after the annual meeting by moving out to Carter Hall, bag and baggage, the very next day. It had been arranged that she was to share Mrs. Patton's apartment, which was in the new building on the east side of the quadrangle and accommodated two very easily. She found herself quite at home almost at once, and in a week she had slipped into the harness and was doing as big a day's work as anybody ought to do.

By no means the least of Anne Coleridge's charms was a knack for doing things easily, without commotion; and she not only had it, she knew she had it, and that it was—well, that people liked

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things done that way. She was on her mettle when she came out to Carter Hall, and so gracefully and quietly did she launch herself into the routine of residence there that few people noticed, even, how easily she did it. They simply took her for granted.

Ramsay was off lecturing somewhere the day she came, but the next evening when he sat down at the head of the long table, he noticed that in some subtle way or other she seemed completely to belong there. And it was a recreation to see the way she had dressed for dinner.

She had, of course, often visited at the Hall, but not until she had been several days in residence there did she comprehend fully what an immense, complex, nicely adjusted institution it was, and what a talent for administration was demanded of the warden. He ran it all too well, she thought, to get the credit for it, and she found many of her fellow-residents with the notion that Carter

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Hall ran itself. Yet no difficulty was too minute, no detail too insignificant to be laid before him, and she saw that whether it was the first question or the twentieth since dinner, whether he was allowed to do one thing at a time, or expected to do half a dozen, his answers were never hasty nor dogmatic, and that judging from the range of them, there was hardly a detail connected with the settlement which was not at his tongue's end or his finger tips. She reflected that a man as quick and eager as he was could hardly be, by nature, a patient man, either.

Indeed, she found the warden interesting and admirable, and there were some standing contradictions about him which piqued her curiosity. How did he manage, she wondered, to do so completely away with the forms and flourishes of politeness, and still to preserve the thing itself? And why was it that he could blurt out anything that came into his mind to say, the most amazing

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indiscretions they seemed sometimes, without setting people by the ears? She watched him, from a distance, rather minutely during her first days at Carter Hall—from a distance, because she knew he was doing two men's work, and she did not intend that he should be badgered by her society unless he chose to be.

The day after the democratic ward convention nominated Schmeckenbecker, they opened the campaign in the northern part of the ward with a mass-meeting in the auditorium at Carter Hall, and, in company with a number of the residents, Miss Coleridge attended it. There were all the accessories of a political meeting, a brass band, a semicircle of vice-presidents on the platform, with Ramsay and the candidate, very red and shiny, in the middle. The hall was packed.

One of the vice-presidents made a few inaudible remarks and was cordially applauded by everybody, when he sat

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down much sooner than might have been expected ; Ramsay introduced Mr. Schmeckenbecker in as few words as possible, and the serious business of the evening began.

Anne Coleridge found difficulty in taking it seriously, and though outwardly she betrayed, of course, no unseemly levity, she found the cigar manufacturer more amusing than instructive. He was speaking pretty well, too, and what he said was by no means foolish, yet the imposing solemnity of the fat little man was undeniably comical. He concluded with a prodigious burst of oratory and bowed several times very complacently in response to the applause, which, though not rapturous, was a good deal warmer than she had expected to hear.

When it died away, Ramsay came forward. "As the candidate has very well said," he began, and Miss Coleridge smiled, for now the thing was said well. He went on for perhaps fifteen minutes, summing up the turgid oratory in a

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rapid, straightforward, businesslike presentation of the case, always as though simply giving assent to what the candidate had already made sufficiently clear. He concluded:—

“It looks well for the future of this city when a municipal party declares its independence of national questions, and takes its stand on a purely municipal issue, and on an issue, moreover, that is vital to the well-being of all of us. And I am standing here to pledge to Mr. Schmeckenbecker, in behalf of Carter Hall, and I hope of all its friends and all the friends of good government, our enthusiastic support.”

And then there came a shout that was a shout, and another and another, till the body of sound pent up in the crowded room seemed to have material weight. The blood surged into Anne Coleridge's face, and she wanted to shout herself. It did not occur to her till afterwards that perhaps the Men's Club had had a good deal to do with setting that wave

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of enthusiasm into motion at just the right time.

She was caught in an eddy in the crowd which was streaming out of the hall and was one of the last to reach the door. Then she heard the warden call her name.

"So you came to the launching," he said, coming up to her. "Let me introduce Mr. Schmeckenbecker, Miss Coleridge."

She knew perfectly well that Ramsay was not addicted to performing miscellaneous introductions, that he followed the English custom in such matters much closer than most Americans do. She guessed what he wanted of her, and cordially held out her hand to the little candidate.

"I think you're doing a splendid thing," she said. "A great many people's lives will be happier if you succeed."

After he had left them, Miss Coleridge and the warden walked together

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down the passage toward the drawing-room.

“Thank you,” he said. “I’m a bit nervous about Schmeckenbecker. He’s all right, but hard-mouthed, I’m afraid. Unless you get him headed right at the start, he’s likely to bolt the track. You didn’t mind being called in, did you?”

“Of course not.” She thought she deserved some credit for having guessed so well, but she was amused—and pleased, too—that he should so confidently take her for granted.

They went on into the drawing-room in silence, but then, as she nodded and walked away, he came out of whatever had preoccupied him. “Are you busy for the next half hour?” he asked abruptly.

“Since it’s half past ten o’clock at night, I’ll call my day’s work over,” she said, smiling, “unless there’s something you want me to do.”

“Oh, just sit down in this Morris chair for a while and—well, do any-

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thing you please." He smiled, too, asked if he might light a cigarette, and moved another chair around opposite the one he indicated. She did as he asked, but chose to wait for him to begin the conversation.

He was in no hurry, it seemed, but as she watched him, she saw a puzzled look come into his face which deepened into a frown of annoyance. "It's ridiculous," he burst out at last, "but for anything I can remember to the contrary, I've invited you out here and left you to shift for yourself. I can't recall having spoken to you or to anybody else about you."

She was shaking her head and trying not to smile.

"I'm sorry I'm such an ass. It didn't occur to me till this minute that you hadn't been out here a long while. We'll try to make amends at once."

"Oh, I'm quite settled and getting along beautifully. And it wasn't your fault at all. With politics added to your

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regular work, you had enough to do, and I was careful to keep away from under foot. I didn't give you any chance to bother about me, really." It struck her that this might sound like a clumsy lead for a compliment. She couldn't blame him for doing anything she had made so obvious, but she hoped he would not pay it.

"If a few more people were as thoughtful as that—" he began. This was not the compliment she had been afraid of. Then, "What do you think of Schmeckenbecker?"

"I don't know what I think," she answered slowly. "Isn't he a little bit ludicrous? He is; but I mean, won't that hurt him?"

"That's what worries Haversham," said the warden. "He wouldn't do in an Irish ward, and that's true for you. But out here—"

He stood up and flung away his cigarette, and, plunging his hands in his pockets, began walking up and down.

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“Look here, Miss Coleridge,” he said, halting suddenly before her. “I’d like to know what you think about it. Would it bore you to death if I told you the whole story?”

“That doesn’t need an answer, certainly,” she said, “but do you mean it? Or are you paying compliments?”

“Well, we break even,” he remarked. “That wants no answer, either. Won’t you come into my office? I can make things a little plainer in there.”

After that evening Anne Coleridge rapidly grew to be, though not a power in the campaign, at least an influence. Not at once, however; for the warden was cautious even when appearances were as promising as they were here. But when he found that she saw the relations of things quickly and pretty justly, and that when he asked her opinion she told him what she thought and not what she guessed he wanted her to think, he gave a good deal of weight to her opinions.

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Of course, now that the campaign was fairly started, Carter Hall talked of very little else. Ramsay had no love for mystery for its own sake, and he talked about what they had done and were about to do with the utmost frankness. But when he talked with her there was a difference. He told her his notions before he had decided for himself whether they were good or not, and often he made her the unconscious arbiter between himself and Haversham. They saw but little of each other, for she herself was busy day and evening, and the warden seldom had more than a moment's leisure; but thanks to a certain incisive way of getting to the point which he was a master of and she was quick to appreciate, and also to the intelligent sympathy which made it possible for each to follow the other's short cuts, they got a good deal of conference into the shreds and patches of time when they were together.

What he talked of most with her, and

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what he discussed with no one else, was his hope and his endeavour to win to his cause the support of Father Lauth. He had mentioned this, you may remember, to Haversham at the outset, but as he had seen at once that the doctor could be of no assistance to him here, he resolved to do what he could alone. As the campaign progressed and the strategical positions defined themselves, he grew more keenly aware that the key to the situation was in the priest's hands. Without him, it was true he might win, but with him the victory was certain.

A very pleasant acquaintance that might almost have been called a friendship existed between Ramsay and Father Lauth. Their more bookish tastes and their ideas on many academic questions were close enough together to give scope for much cordial agreement and genial controversy, and the warden was sure of at least a patient hearing of his case; he presented it in his own way,

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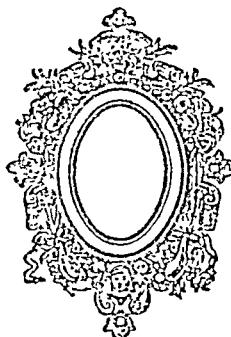
straightforwardly, and without suppression of anything. But the priest met him, as often as they talked, in a way that he found very baffling. He listened, he asked questions, he often let fall very interesting *obiter dicta*, but Ramsay could get no hint as to what his real decision was to be; he could not tell whether his words were accomplishing anything or whether he might not just as well be trying to whistle up the wind.

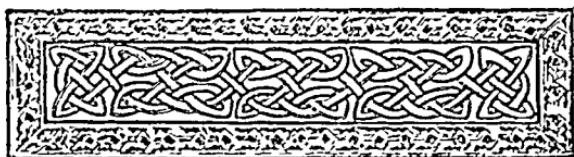
It was here that Anne Coleridge helped him most. She seemed to have a sort of instinct for the priest's point of view. The grain of her mind ran more nearly with his than Ramsay's did, perhaps, and often she could reach the thought which lay behind his apparently casual questions and irrelevant comments. After Ramsay made this discovery, every talk with Father Lauth was followed by another with the girl which usually left him with some ground under his feet — with the feeling that he had something to go on.

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“I’ll tell you,” he said one day, “if I do win him over, it will be you who did it.”

“That’s nonsense, of course — ” there she made a little pause, “but I liked to have you say it, anyway.”





CHAPTER VI

ALDERMAN ALBERT GOLANS was in an unenviable frame of mind. The insurrection in his ward had in its earlier stages afforded him, if not a very genuine amusement, at least the opportunity to appear amused. But that period was long passed. They were carrying things altogether too far. All along Cameron Avenue rebellion was raising its head; over in the Italian colony between Hood and Byron streets, Ramsay was talking their own ridiculous lingo to enthusiastic crowds in dingy halls and to smaller gatherings on the street corners, and in the saloons, and Gollans's lieutenant, though not in despair, represented daily that it would be

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impossible to check the assault without a larger supply of the munitions of war.

The alderman's dominant feeling about it was one of irritation. He had not yet begun to consider the possibility of defeat. Down in the Frying-pan, Haversham's own quarter, he was actually making gains. He stopped to smile when he thought of the situation down there in that quarter. And up to this morning the campaign in the German district, though it was here that he was meeting the most serious losses, had cost him but little concern, for here they were fighting him with the traditional reformer's weapons, mass-meetings and morality, and it would be a colder day than one was likely to find in this climate when he could not afford to smile at such methods.

But this morning the report had come in that at a meeting at Carter Hall last night, one of the speakers had playfully referred to him as Gollanski! The train had caught at once, and this morn-

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ing, according to his disgusted lieutenant, the whole district was crackling with it. Gollanski! His sense of humour was not strong enough to save him from labouring half an hour to see whether he could not retaliate with some such transformation of the name of his rival, Schmeckenbecker. The whole campaign was past a joke, and Gollans was getting mad enough to do something.

It was not an auspicious time for any one to pay the alderman a call,—a particularly bad one for Father Lauth, who always wanted money for this thing or that; but a priest is a priest, and Gollans mustered his best manner as well as he could and widened his mouth in an attempt at a bland smile. They talked for a few minutes pleasantly enough about parochial matters; Gollans led, asking one question after another, and, at last, with the idea of forestalling the request he expected the priest to make, he said: —

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“I hope it won’t be a great while before I can make you another donation for the school. At present this election that’s coming takes all my time and what small money I can spare. But I’ll not forget you.”

The priest could strike to the roots when he chose, and for reasons of his own he did it now. “I have not come to you for money to-day,” he said; “I have come to ask you a question. If you are again elected alderman, will you help to improve the sanitary condition of the tenements? — or will you hinder?”

Gollans’s face turned purple. The question was a flick of the whip on a spot which his antagonist had already worn raw. If a layman had asked it, he would have answered, “What the hell does it matter to you?” and for a second he was near forgetting that his inquisitor was not a layman. The priest’s gesture checked him, and he modified the form although not the spirit of this retort.

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The lines in Father Lauth's face settled deeper. He folded his arms and waited. After expecting for a moment that he would say something, Gollans looked up at him, the ugly sneer still on his face, but as the priest met his glance, he lowered his eyes and began playing with a penholder on his desk.

Up to that moment he was simply irritated, smarting under the whip. He was not an imaginative man; a wholly new idea made its way but slowly with him to the point of apperception. But the black figure of the Redemptorist priest, the steady resolution in his eyes, the look of conscious power about his mouth put into the alderman's mind the vague notion that Father Lauth intended to beat him, and that he knew he could do it. The sneer was gone from his lips, and his face turned from purple to yellowish white when he looked up again and began to talk. For the first time he was trying to look defeat between the eyes.

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“We have always pulled together pretty well, Father, haven’t we? I’ve tried to stand by you and you’ve left politics to me—”

“You have not answered my question,” said the priest. “That is what I ask, an answer!” He spoke gently enough, but the tone of the last words was peremptory.

Gollans moved uneasily in his chair. “Your school means a great deal to you, Father,” he began, but Father Lauth’s uplifted head and the blazing light in his eyes checked him.

“You are trying to offer either a threat or a bribe—stop there, and answer my question.”

“I will answer your question when the time comes. But it has nothing to do with Haversham and Schmeckenbecker and this next election. They’re grafters, and all there is to their campaign is graft. They put up a reform front because they hoped they could get you to help them. They lied to you.”

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He got on his feet, kicked his chair out of his way, and, leaning over his desk, shook his finger at the priest. "Look at Haversham. He's a reformer, he is! Making speeches to Woman's Clubs all over the city and reeling off his goody-good talk. I wonder if they know who his patients are and how he makes a living! As for Ramsay—" Gollans was excited, and his perception was quicker than usual—"Ramsay may mean all right, but he don't know what he's up against. He thinks that little Dutchman 'll take his orders after he gets into the council, and that's where he's dead wrong. Schmeckenbecker's going to stick it into him just as soon as he gets the chance."

He was watching the priest closely; he seemed to be making no headway whatever. And then a happy thought struck him. He laughed slowly, and said, in conclusion, "In fact, I happen to know that he's got the pipes laid to do it already."



“HE SHOOK HIS FINGER AT THE PRIEST.”

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That shot told. Father Lauth frowned. "This is no time for trifling," he said. "If you can prove such a charge as that, do it."

"I can prove it," said Gollans, "and I'll be able to show you the proof inside of forty-eight hours."

"Very good," said the priest. "I shall come to see it." He rose and started toward the door, but Gollans had one thing more to say.

"I'm proving this for you, Father, but not for Mr. Ramsay. I owe him no favours. I'll thank you not to mention what I've said to him."

The priest nodded assent, and, with a brief good morning, strode away.

Gollans's charge against Schmeckenbecker had been made quite on the spur of the moment, and, after the priest had gone away, he feared a little that the time he had allowed himself was too short, for he had not only to collect the proof but to invent the crime as well. But in forty-eight hours one can get

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evidence of sorts, of almost anything, and, of course, he did not need real court-of-law proof. A few black-looking circumstances would be enough to arouse Father Lauth's suspicions and keep him out of the campaign.

Gollans had heard a rumour that Schmeckenbecker was getting "chesty," in other words that the success of his campaign had turned his head, and that the constant supervision of his two managers was becoming irksome to him. He wanted his head, and they were afraid to let him have it. That hint gave Gollans something to start with. He sent for two of his henchmen to whom he had decided to confide the affair, and by the time they had arrived, he had their instructions ready. They were much pleased and entirely confident.

"But, remember," said Gollans, "you've got only to-day and to-morrow, and get it in writing if you can. Get it in writing, boys, and we have them by the short hairs."

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The rumour about Schmeckenbecker was, unhappily, not far beyond the truth, and Ramsay and Haversham were greatly worried about him. Each new success made him worse, until at last they had yielded to necessity and allowed him to take pretty much his own gait. "He's sure to make a fool of himself," Haversham commented, "but the result may be all right. He may scare himself half to death without doing any serious damage."

Schmeckenbecker's throat had become chronically numb ; his stumpy little legs were always tired, and he had sweated off about fifteen pounds, but his soul soared majestic, like the eagle. For forty years people had patronised him and often laughed at him, had left him and Mrs. Schmeckenbecker completely alone in the idea that he was a great man. He had many friends, but, seemingly, none of them had ever so much as suspected that he was a great man. But at last his opportunity had come and

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he had seized it. And what a reward, after those years of waiting; to be cheered nightly by enthusiastic audiences, to see his name in the newspapers day after day, to be the subject of long editorials — it was worth waiting for.

And he owed it all to himself. He felt no debt of gratitude to Ramsay and Haversham. They were merely the instruments of fate. And they, indeed, had seemed to envy him his greatness, had shown a petty desire to detract from his triumph, and interfere in what was purely his affair. They were coming to their senses at last, however, and leaving him to manage his campaign as he thought best.

It was well they had ceased meddling. He had done one or two very shrewd strokes of business in the past twenty-four hours. Two lodging-house keepers down in the Frying-pan, Hintz and Johnson, who had hitherto been republicans, were going to support him, and, more than that, were going to

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round up their lodgers for him. He had met with some losses in the Frying-pan, and this would counterbalance them. They had come to see him, and on their telling him of some dissatisfaction they felt toward Gollans, he had promptly won them over. Not for nothing, of course. All politics is a matter of trade, and he had promised them that when the new tenement law went into effect, he would see to it that they were protected. For was it not better that all the tenements but those two should be made sanitary than that none should be?

They had asked him to put the agreement in writing. He didn't know whether he would or not. A matter like that might be embarrassing. Well, he would see.



CHAPTER VII

GN the Sunday before the election Ramsay found himself after dinner in possession of an hour in which there was nothing that he must do, and as they had some strangers from out of town on their hands, he was piloting them about the place. They were going through the schoolhouse, looking at rooms for cooking classes, wood and iron working, kindergartening, and so on, when, halting before a door, they heard some one playing the piano.

Ramsay listened an instant. "No, there's no class in here now," he said, "and the room is exactly like the last one we looked at. We'll go on down this way, if you please."

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He took them to the library, turned them over to another resident, and went back to the schoolroom. He knew who it was he had heard playing, and he felt pretty sure that she was alone.

“Is this your favourite piano?” he asked, after she had told him he might come in. Countless hours of kindergarten marches had worn through the two middle octaves, and the keys sagged.

“Oh, it’s in tune,” she said. “And when you run off to hide yourself, you must take what you can get; a dry morsel, you know, and quietness therewith — ”

They were pretty well acquainted now, and she was not afraid of his saying, “I fear I intrude,” or “Were you trying to hide from everybody?” He nodded curtly.

“Do you mind playing that thing again? — the rocking-horse part?”

She began the familiar *ballade* got about half through, and lost herself. Then, impatiently, she faked a cadence

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into the original key, and shook her head. "It won't do. Mr. Ramsay, will you let me ask you a silly question? You don't have to answer it."

"I think I know what it is," he said gravely. "Yes, ask it."

"Well, then — oh, it is silly, but — Am I any good out here, at all? Am I really pulling my weight, or am I just going through the motions?"

"Yes," he said, nodding thoughtfully, "that's the question. We all ask it now and then, and nobody can answer, for himself or for anybody else. The only thing to do with it is to wear it out." He was talking half to himself, for he needed that particular homily as much as she did, but after a moment's pause he roused himself and turned to her.

"Of course," he said, "you know without my telling you —" He smiled. "So I won't tell, but you know just the same."

She flushed a little with pleasure, and, smiling, began a phrase of the *ballade*

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again, but checked it abruptly as she thought of something else. "Did you see Mr. Schmeckenbecker this afternoon?" she asked.

"Yes," he said, pulling up a chair. "And confound Mr. Schmeckenbecker! He keeps me guessing more than Gol-lans. He's off on a new tack to-day, meeker than a toy lamb. Wanted my advice about everything, and showed me his speech for the big meeting to-morrow night at Harrison's Theatre. He said he didn't want to make any mistakes."

"Well, but what in the world does it mean?"

"It means, I suppose, that he has committed some colossally stupid blunder, and he's afraid I'll find out what it is."

She quite agreed with him. "Though, very likely," she added, "it isn't as bad as he thinks it is."

"Perhaps not," said the warden, "and perhaps it's worse." He rose and began

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his old patrol, adapted to the narrow limits of his office, four strides and an about-face, and she watched him as she had often watched before. It had never occurred to her before that it was possible for Douglas Ramsay to be slack-nerved, weary, in need of a little encouragement and support himself. But she saw now how the spring had gone out of his stride, how his head drooped, and how haggard his eyes were, and there was something pleasant about the discovery.

"We shall be beaten on Tuesday," he said. "I know that as well as I shall on Wednesday morning. Up to yesterday we were winning, but last night the tide set the other way. I can't tell you how I know, but it's true."

"I know," she said, and something different in the quality of her voice arrested his stride. "How many speeches have you made since last Sunday? And how many hours have you slept?"

"Well, you may be right," he said.

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“But I don’t think it altogether a question of fag.”

She began the *ballade* again and this time she played it through, though half her mind was somewhere else. “Mr. Ramsay,” she said, when she had finished, “what are you going to do tomorrow?” What with watching her and listening to her music he had wandered far away from the campaign and from himself, and he came back with an effort.

“About six things a minute during the day and three big meetings in different parts of the ward in the evening.”

“They’re a sort of last rally, aren’t they?”

“Yes, they’ll get the last ounce of steam we’ve left.”

“Well, don’t you think —” That was the wrong beginning and she stopped in some embarrassment. He glanced at her in surprise. She had been so good a comrade during those weeks that he had forgotten, or thought he

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had, that she was anything else. This reminder pleased him.

She got the right start in a minute. "I have to go home to-morrow to — to attend to a few things, and I shall be there all day. You won't have a minute by yourself out here, and you ought to rest a little for the evening's work. Nobody will be able to find you at our house, and you won't have to meet anybody, nor talk, nor do anything you don't want to — not even drink tea. You don't need to say in advance when you're coming or that you're coming at all. But if you think it would be a rest to come, I'll be very glad to have you."

The half hour with her had refreshed him, and he buckled into his Sunday evening work with more zest than he had felt for the past three or four days, but the notion — he did call it a premonition — that they were going down to defeat on Tuesday was not to be got rid of. He found it still in possession when he waked up Monday morning,

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and with it he felt the dragging fatigue which she and her music had driven away for a while last evening.

He worked as hard as ever, he answered every one of the multitudinous demands that were made upon him promptly and almost as effectively as though he had been fresh, but he realized that it was bad economy. It was like making a ten-horse-power engine pull a fifteen-horse load. A good many times during that morning he thought for an instant of the hour he was to have before dinner-time when he could let go, when there would be no questions to answer, no decisions to make, and he blessed Anne Coleridge for thinking of it.

He was out about the ward for two or three hours after lunch, and when he came back, he found that Mr. Payne—he was ex-president of the Carter Hall Association, you remember—had been calling him up on the telephone at intervals of fifteen minutes for the past

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hour, and had finally said that he would come out to the Hall and wait until Mr. Ramsay came back.

He was evidently much disturbed about something, and Ramsay wondered, a little uneasily, what it could be. He had not concerned himself at all, heretofore, in the campaign, and something serious — to his thinking at least — must have occurred to drag him in thus, at the eleventh hour. Ramsay dreaded the approaching interview. Mr. Payne was prone to wander, he was old, he was opinionated, and yet he never seemed to know exactly what his opinion was. The warden braced himself when he heard the uncertain voice of his visitor out in the hall inquiring for him. He was very old, and whatever he said or did, one must not forget that.

He came in labouring under a strong excitement and almost helpless from it. For a minute or two after Ramsay had got him into a chair he could only say:

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"This is very shocking, Mr. Ramsay. I don't know what we are to do. I don't indeed."

"I don't know what you refer to, sir," said the warden, gently. "Have you heard bad news? We'll hope it isn't as bad as it seems."

He was totally unprepared for the outburst which followed.

"You have brought this upon us!" cried the old man. "You might better have pulled down Carter Hall stone by stone. You have discredited us and undone the work of years. Oh, we should have kept close watch!"

"How have I done this, Mr. Payne? What have I done?"

"You were responsible, were you not, for this outrageous nomination of — of — his name escapes me. You publicly pledged the confidence and support of Carter Hall to *him*, to a common black-mailer, a low, intriguing politician — "

Ramsay interrupted him, not roughly, but in a voice that compelled his silence

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and attention. "In a campaign like this, loose personal charges are often indulged in by both sides. Whoever has told you those things has misinformed you. What you say about Mr. Schmeckenbecker is not true. He is a perfectly respectable man, a manufacturer of cigars. He is not a blackmailer. He has never been active in politics before; in fact, he is not as much a politician as the situation demanded. But as far as honesty and decency go, I will guarantee him."

The warden thought he was perfectly cool, but it is to be doubted if he would have said that last sentence if he had been. The violence of the old man's attack had made him forget the uneasiness Schmeckenbecker had caused him during the past day or two. However, nothing that could be said to Payne had any weight with him now.

"I do not accept your guarantee," he cried. "You have forfeited our confidence. You have allied yourself with

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thugs and anarchists. You have used Carter Hall to further your personal ambitions—”

“I have done nothing, Mr. Payne, which I did not tell you openly and before I had lifted a hand, that I meant to do.”

Ramsay had in mind a good deal more to say. He understood Payne's attitude perfectly. When the old man had voted assent to the campaign, he had probably not been aware that Gollangs was a republican; he had, no doubt, assumed, as a matter of course, that so bad a man must be a democrat. It was unlikely, since he lived principally in the past, that he had given the matter another thought until last night, or perhaps this morning, when some of the Great Ones in the party had waited upon him. Ramsay wondered if Old Uncle John himself hadn't made one of that informal committee. It wasn't unlikely.

They had given him, of course, a hor-

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rible fright, had made it clear to him that, unless checked, Ramsay's course would bring ruin, destruction, anarchy, free silver, the whole pack of political hobgoblins, upon them all, and had sent him, full of these terrors out to Carter Hall to "call Ramsay off." He was the oldest of the twenty associates and traditionally the most important, and he had the further merit of being the only one of the twenty whom the committee could have sent on such an errand. They may not have had much confidence that he would succeed, but it was worth a trial anyway.

It was a shame, Ramsay thought, to treat an old man so, and he resolved to save up what was in his mind to say until he should have the luck to fall in with a member of that committee.

"I'm sorry you've lost confidence in me, Mr. Payne," he said, rising and holding out his hand. "I hope some day I may win it back again. I shall always try to deserve it."

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“But you must act at once,” cried Mr. Payne. “This candidate of yours is a rascal, a blackmailer. If he is elected, it will be terrible. You must withdraw your support before to-morrow morning.”

Ramsay spoke very quietly, but with perfect finality. “I can’t do that, Mr. Payne,” and the unsuccessful envoy went back to his committee.

It was half-past four now. The warden cast a glance over his desk and drew a long breath. He pulled on his gloves, seized his hat, and started for the door. Just as he was shutting it he heard some one call, “Telephone, Mr. Ramsay.” It was a narrow escape, but just as good as though it had been wider. He dashed after and caught a car in the middle of the block. He was like a schoolboy out for recess.

He found her in a big book-lined room, seated by a tea-table; she was always dressed so that it was a pleasure to look at her, but to-day she surpassed

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herself. She did not rise, but nodded toward a big, leather chair. "There are the cigarettes and matches and things," she said, "but if you'd rather, you may smoke your pipe. Yes, really, you may," she assured him. "My little brother always smokes a pipe when he comes back from college."

"Your little brother," commented Ramsay, "who pulled number three in the 'Varsity boat last summer. I pulled that oar myself once, a thousand years ago."

He heard a heavy door opened somewhere, and then the butler's voice quite distinctly, "Miss Coleridge is not at home." With a movement which told of infinite comfort and satisfaction, he settled deeper into the chair, and drew a long, fragrant breath through his pipe. She was watching him with a look a little amused, a little curious, but wholly friendly.

"You give one plenty of surprises," she said. "Yesterday you surprised me

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by looking tired and out of sorts, as if you needed — ”

“ ‘A touch of the shoulder to preserve my formation,’ as Mulvaney said,” he put in, for she had hesitated. “I did, and you gave it to me.”

“And to-day, when I have absorbed that idea and am really ready to rise to the occasion, you come marching along about as much in need of sympathy as a drum major. I had lots of sympathy to lavish on you this afternoon — and look at you! What am I to do with it?”

“I need it,” he said, “never mind appearances.” He told her all about his interview with Mr. Payne.

“Do you know what I believe?” she said, after he had finished and she had sat thoughtfully silent for a while over his account of it. “I believe that Father Lauth has said something to Mr. Gollangs. He wouldn’t have called for help, would he, unless he was badly frightened?”

“I believe you’re right,” he said.

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“We’ve made noise enough to scare most people, but Gollans is an old stager and not easily stampeded. It’s much more likely that Father Lauth has taken a hand. That’s one to us, certainly.”

He seemed to speak with only half his mind on it, as though it mattered very little after all. She frowned as a doctor will over a puzzling case. “Are you still entertaining the notion that Mr. Gollans is going to beat you tomorrow?” she asked.

“It’s odd about that,” he said, smiling. “At this moment I’m perfectly happy, perfectly contented. But I’m just as sure as that I’m looking at you, that Gollans will beat us. We were winning up to Saturday night, too.”

“We’re not going to talk politics this afternoon. What do you want to do? Did you bring a book in your pocket or do you want to be amused? I’ll do anything you like.”



CHAPTER VIII

E carried with him as he strode down town from her house the same feeling of detachment from his cares which had come to him while he was with her. He thought about the speeches he must make during their last assault that evening, he thought upon the various indirections of Dr. Haversham and the perversity of Schmeckenbecker, but they seemed to belong to a story he was reading. He himself was still looking at Anne Coleridge, listening to her, enjoying every turn of her head, every inflection of her voice.

A newsboy was crying an extra. Ramsay had been aware of his hoarse piping all the way down the block, but now the words took meaning. "All

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about the reform election scandal!" He bought a paper; it was a tri-coloured rag with no morals, a good scent, and a bad smell. "Schmeckenbecker a black-mailer!" was printed in type so large that it took the whole top half of the sheet. He ran his eye hastily over the lower half of the page, trying to learn the nature of the charge. It was likely enough to be true,—Schmeckenbecker was fool enough for almost anything,—but what was it? There were ejaculations, insinuations, but where—ah, here in the frame in the middle! A facsimile of a typewritten letter with Schmeckenbecker's signature at the bottom of it.

Well, he had done it. The letter was a clumsily, or cleverly, written thing, addressed to the keepers of two of the worst tenements in the Frying-pan, the purport of which seemed to be that if they would support him to the extent of their ability, he would see to it that they suffered no inconvenience from the new tenement law. There might, or might

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not, be an implication in it that if they did not support him, they knew what to expect.

He met it as a strong man meets a blow, with a wave of blood-hot anger; but in a moment, while still he stood there with the letters before his eyes, the wave receded and left him cold, yet thinking faster than a man can think except in a passion, grappling with the question what to do. The newsboy was bawling the old refrain in his ears, the crowd jostled him impatiently, but for the moment he did not stir. Then he hurried down to the cab stand in the next block and got into a hansom. Schmeckenbecker, he reflected, looking at his watch, was probably at supper in his rooms over the cigar shop on Cameron Avenue, and his first business was with Schmeckenbecker.

He found him as he expected, and, evidently, from his wordy torrent of explanation, the little candidate had already seen the accusation.

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“Is it true?” asked Ramsay, cutting him short.

“It is a lie.”

“Then it’s a forgery. Come. We’ll have some one in jail for this in an hour.”

“It is not a forgery,” faltered Schmeckenbecker. “But it is a lie, a twice-black, dastard lie.”

“I thought so,” said Ramsay. “They wouldn’t have been fools enough to forge it. No—I don’t want to hear. I know enough about it now. I know all I want to know. I suppose you will deny or explain the thing as well as you can at the meeting to-night. I shall speak at those meetings myself as we have arranged. I shall go my own way and say what I think best. I shall tell the truth as far as I know it, and I advise you to do the same. If you can explain yourself, well and good, but I shan’t concern myself with that. I’m not going to try to rehabilitate you. I’m going to try to save the election. I’ll

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get over to the meeting at Harrison's Theatre, but I may be a little late. You'll begin without me, of course." Before the meaning of all this could fairly get past Schmeckenbecker's ears, the wheels of Ramsay's cab were already rasping along the car tracks down Cameron Avenue.

Harrison's Theatre was the largest hall in the ward, but every seat in it was occupied long before the hour set for the meeting, and when Schmeckenbecker faced the audience from the stage, he saw it massed solidly everywhere. There did not appear to be room for one more to get in. When the main entrance was blocked, they had found out the side door, and had poured in across the stage until the biggest policeman of the detail was given orders that nobody else should come in that way, whoever he was. Four out of five of them were Germans, for the theatre was well within the outskirts of that colony.

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Haversham opened the meeting. He was never a good speaker, and was at a sad disadvantage to-night, for he was on exceptionally thin ice. The audience did not want his jokes and parables, but they waited patiently for him to finish. They were waiting for Schmeckenbecker.

About supper-time the candidate had seen down in his part of the ward newsboys giving away copies of the paper which had attacked him to whoever passed on the street, and it had made him very uncomfortable. He saw those tri-coloured sheets scattered about in his audience like fallen leaves, but even without this portent, he must have been aware that this meeting was like none of the others he had addressed during the campaign.

He was nervous while Haversham spoke, partly in anticipation of the reception he himself was likely to get from the audience, when the doctor had finished, and partly from an uneasy memory of what Ramsay had said to

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him at supper-time. But when the time came, he felt better. It was a familiar and delightful sensation now to stand upon a platform alone in the eye of an audience, and also Ramsay had not yet come. He walked down to the foot-lights and began his speech, the oratorical masterpiece, it was to be, of the whole series. There was no volley of cheering to drown out his first phrases, and compel him to repeat them, and the novelty disconcerted him somewhat, but he plunged ahead bravely, nevertheless.

The audience waited to hear what he would say, how he would try to explain this charge of blackmail. He might, perhaps, have carried it off with merely a bald denial, but he did not even give them that satisfaction ; he gave them oratory. They were in no mood for that. There was a sound of moving feet and growling voices, and then somebody shouted a jeering question from the rear of the hall. Schmeckenbecker could not make out the words, but the hostile inflection

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was not to be mistaken. "I did not understand you," he said.

"What do you say to this?" called the man, waving the newspaper.

"My only answer to that," answered Schmeckenbecker, suiting the action to the word as well as he could, "is silent contemptuousness."

"That ain't enough for us," shouted somebody else, and there followed a roar of assent. He glared at them an instant and tried to go on with his speech.

They did not let him go far. Even with the non-Teutonic twenty per cent among them, and the few choice spirits from Gollans's headquarters to start the ball rolling, they were slow at this sort of thing, but they were warming to their work and much in earnest about it.

They drowned out his voice when he tried to speak, they fell silent when he stopped, to give way to some rude utterances from the gallery. Haversham, who saw that the situation was past saving, tried vainly to signal the band

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to strike up, and at the same time whispered hoarsely to Schmeckenbecker to sit down.

But the little candidate was beyond reason. He faced the mob, gallantly shouting his defiance into the vortex of sounds which swallowed it up. Every one of their taunts cut him like a lash. They were laughing at him! Laughing in his face! It was a bitter crucifixion for his vanity, but he stood the torture gamely, and not without a certain pitiful dignity.

Some man not far from the front rolled his newspaper into a wad and flung it at him. It fell short, but the idea was caught up quickly, and the execution improved with practice. In a moment the twisted missiles were sailing all around him. One or two struck his face.

The group on the stage were in a tumult. Several of the vice-presidents had fled precipitately by the stage door, while others with Haversham were try-

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ing by a sort of ludicrous pantomime to quiet the now thoroughly excited audience. The time had about come, it seemed, for a general retreat. The front part of the mob was all that could throw newspapers with effect, and somebody in the rear of the centre isle seemed to be starting a movement in force toward the stage. He was coming on as fast as he could, and a good many seemed disposed to follow him. He was drawing near the stage.

"Thank God," said Haversham, "it's Ramsay. They wouldn't let him come through the stage door."

But as only a few in the audience had recognised him, his progress to the front had been misunderstood. His followers in the centre and his imitators to right and left were coming along in fast increasing numbers. They did not know what they meant to do when they arrived, but that did not make them much less formidable. It was a race now, a question who could make the stage first.

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Ramsay won it. He worried out of the tangle, scrambled over the rail to the orchestra pit, over the piano and the footlights. He whirled around and faced them, flinging out his big hands before him, palms forward. They knew who he was now, and thanks to his dramatic entrance, they paused to see what he would do next. He waited an instant for silence, and when it came he asked quietly:—

“Will you listen to something I have to say?”

“Will you tell us about this?” some one demanded, waving a still unthrown newspaper.

Again he had to wait a little, then quietly again, simply, but with no overdone nonchalance he said, “I know very little about it; and I care still less. It is not even important, if true.”

Haversham, who thought he was braced for anything, gasped. Schmeckenbecker stopped mopping his forehead with his black silk handkerchief, and

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gaped at the warden's back. For a good five seconds out in the audience there was a solid, incredulous silence. Then from the gallery came a solitary, jeering guffaw.

"Wait!" cried the warden, for the first time raising his voice. "Wait till I tell you who else is laughing. Do you want to know? He is laughing, not at *him*—" he pointed to Schmeckenbecker—"but at you, at you who laugh. He has laughed before, and many a time, and always at you. Shall I tell you about him?"

And then, with a grim simplicity, Ramsay told. He had something of the orator's instinct, and in his excitement he acted on it. The guffaw from the gallery gave him the theme,—the man who laughed,—and he built all his speech upon it. His audience had spent its hostility on Schmeckenbecker and in the reaction they listened to him. He had his will with them, and he told some of the times in the past ten years when the man had laughed.

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He told them, in conclusion, of his own studies in the ward, of the map he had made of it, and how he had taken it to this man and shown him what it meant. "There will be deaths here, and here, and here," he said, and the man had laughed at him. And after the epidemic he took the map again and showed it to him, with the yellow crosses marking where they had died, and again the man laughed at him. Had he not sent flowers to most of the funerals?

"Now," he said, picking up a newspaper at his feet, "you ask me to explain this. I know very little about it. I suppose Schmeckenbecker signed it through a mistake. I have not asked him. But who tricked him into signing it? The man who has laughed at you and wants to laugh again. He was frightened yesterday, he means to laugh to-morrow. It won't be a contest to-morrow between Schmeckenbecker and Gollans, but between you and Gollans. What is Schmeckenbecker to you?"

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Nothing but what you make him. You make and you can unmake. You give and you can take away. And now he knows that. You have told him to-night that you do not wish him to sell protection to two lodging-house keepers. He will not forget what you have told him to-night. He will do your bidding. If you elect Gollans, he will sell protection and all his two hundred lodging-house keepers. If you elect Schmeckenbecker, he will not even protect his two. You may be quite certain of that, even though he signed that paper.

"There he is. He is your servant. He has not learned to laugh at you. At the end of his term, if you want another, choose another. But do not destroy him at a jibe from Gollans, in order that Gollans may stand in his place. You can choose whether Gollans shall laugh again to-morrow night or not. It's between you and him. Think it over."



CHAPTER IX

T three o'clock Wednesday afternoon Douglas Ramsay walked into his private office and locked the door behind him. He sat down at his desk, laid a blank sheet of letter paper before him, and dipped his pen into the ink.

For just an instant he hesitated, for an instant he let his eyes rest on the familiar furniture of the little room. During his four years of labour here, he had sent his roots deep, the strongest wrench could never pull them all out of this soil. Part of him must always remain here. It was only for an instant that he let himself go. Then he began to write, in his cramped,

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scholarly hand, a letter to the president of Carter Hall Association.

“Will you please call a meeting of the Association, as soon as it can be made convenient, to act upon my resignation, which I enclose?”

On another sheet he wrote as follows:—

“To THE CARTER HALL ASSOCIATION.

“At the annual meeting, held January last, I obtained your permission to make an attempt to secure the defeat of Albert Gollans, alderman from this ward, and to elect in his stead an alderman who would help instead of hindering our endeavours to improve the sanitary conditions in this and other parts of the city. At the election which took place yesterday our candidate was defeated by a small, but of course sufficient, majority. I have been active in his support, and this result is as much, if not more, of a defeat for me than for him. As I do not wish Carter Hall to

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be embarrassed and made less effective in its work by a discredited warden who has outlived his usefulness in this field, I herewith hand you my resignation of that office, and recommend most earnestly that you accept it.

“DOUGLAS RAMSAY, *Warden.*”

He dropped his pen on the desk ; it rolled to the edge and fell on the floor. He sat staring at the paper, motionless except for the big muscles in his neck which twitched and tugged at one corner of his mouth. It was just twelve hours since he had conceded to the waiting reporters that Gollans was elected. Part of those hours he had slept away in complete exhaustion, the rest of them spent in getting up arrears in the work of Carter Hall. He had had nothing in the way of nourishment except coffee and cigars since—he knew not when. He ought to take a glass of sherry with an egg in it and go for a walk; he ought to strum on his

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piano or read a chapter or two of "Morte d'Arthur." He was not fit for business. That phrase, "a discredited warden who has outlived his usefulness," betrayed him.

He knew all that, but nevertheless he sat there trying to goad his tired mind to grapple with the future. Until now, though he had for several days expected defeat, he had not looked beyond the moment when he should tender his resignation to the Association of Carter Hall. That was done and he was asking, what next?

There was with him no crude question of his ability to get a job, to earn a living. He had, in certain spheres, a national reputation; there were two offers lying on his desk now, either of which the world would regard as a promotion and, for that matter, the royalties from the sale of his books made enough to live on modestly. But what was he to do? Where should he go? He belonged here in the ward, he lived here.

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The goading was all in vain. His thoughts were like a broken regiment. The entrenchments of the future were too much for them, looked too high, and after every attempt they came pouring back over the plain of his recent defeat. There was no use.

Somebody knocked at his door. "Alderman Gollans is here to see you, Mr. Ramsay."

Ramsay rubbed his forehead like a man coming out of a dream. "I'll—I'll see Gollans in a minute or two. Tell him to wait, won't you, please?"

He swung round in his chair and went to the window which looked out into the little grass-grown court. Anne Coleridge was there and a wilderness of babies,—kindergarten youngsters whom she was trying to preserve from sudden death in one way or another. She nodded to him and he answered absently, automatically, for the sight of her did not really get to his mind at all. For a moment he stood there. When

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he turned, his eyes had the old, bright light of battle in them.

He strode to the desk and picked up the two sheets of paper which lay there, jerked them to pieces impatiently, and threw them into the waste-paper basket. Then he unlocked the door. "Come in, Alderman," he said. "I'm glad to see you."

The alderman did not look like a man who had just won a victory, and, after they were seated in the office, Ramsay reminded him of it.

"Well, you were right," he said. "You beat us this time. But own up, didn't we make a good fight?".

"You done me dirt," said Gollans, sourly, avoiding the question. "I know who it was started to misname me Gollanski, and I'll perhaps give him a name he won't like some day. And as for you, you lied about me, too. You told them Monday night that I killed the people off and then sent flowers to the funeral."

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“Well, of course that’s true,” said Ramsay, coolly. “Did you never think of it that way? But I’m sorry you take it personally. I supposed from your coming out here that you meant to let bygones be bygones. Why did you come?”

“I came out to see what you meant to do — from now on.”

“What do you mean to do?”

“I tell you right now,” said Gollans, “that you’d better drop it. I never raised any objections to Carter Hall, but you’ve got to mind your own business. And if you monkey with my buzz saw again, something’s going to drop. You be damned careful from now on or you’ll lose your job.”

“Now, I’ll tell you what I’m going to do,” Ramsay answered pleasantly. “We’re going to get a good ready, and next time we’re going up against you again. And next time we’ll give you a fight that will make this one look like a picnic, and — you can be perfectly sure of this — we shall clean you out.”

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Gollans did an unwise thing. He sat back in his chair and laughed aloud. A laugh reveals more than many words, and the alderman's laugh was such a mirthless performance that Ramsay smiled.

"I'll tell you why," he went on. "Do you know why people have voted for you all these years? Because it never occurred to anybody that it was possible to beat you. They don't care anything about you personally. You've driven them pretty hard when it comes to that; you've really overdone it a little. You've got the idea that you're the boss; that you can do things just because you damn please. When a man gets that idea, he's ripe to be picked. Now then, what was your majority yesterday? A little less than two hundred. They didn't quite drop you. But they all see now how easy it would be to do it. We've begun our next campaign already, and there's only one way it can end, and that end will be that this ward

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will be represented, really represented, in the council."

The warden paused, looked at Gollans, smiled, and went on very slowly : " And you know all this, Mr. Gollans, as well as I do. That is the reason you have come out here to-day. And I know that as well as you do."

" Well," demanded Gollans, roughly, " what do you want? It comes to that, I suppose."

" Why, yes, I suppose it does. You want to know how much it will take to call me off. Well, as long as you do as well by the ward and by the city as an average honest man is likely to, I've no reason for trying to throw you out. In fact, I'd rather not, for a new man is always an experiment. You have a copy of my tenement bill, haven't you? If not, here's a duplicate."

Gollans was silent for a long while. This man Ramsay was only a reformer after all. Here he was in a position to make a great bargain and he knew it,

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and yet all he asked was—Gollans wiped the sweat off his face, for it had been a bad quarter of an hour for him.

“I’ll look this over,” he said, taking the typewritten sheets, and trying to get back some semblance of the old, ducal condescension into his voice. “I’ll look it over and, if it seems to be the right thing, we’ll try to pass it for you, Mr. Ramsay.”

And so passed the glory of the Duke of Cameron Avenue.

Douglas Ramsay was looking out of the window into the court. The babies had gone away, but Anne Coleridge was still there, and this time the warden saw her with more than his eyes. He threw up the sash and, vaulting the sill into the court, stood before her. She looked up at him, and then:—

“What is it?” she demanded. “What has happened?”

“We win!” he cried. “No, not the election, but better. We win Gollans. He came out to see me. He promises to be good.”

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She drew a long deep breath of the April air, and held out her two hands. "Oh, I'm so glad," she said.

"I don't know what I am, over it. He came just in time for me. I'd already written them — you (I forget that you're one of them) — my resignation."

"You didn't intend to resign?"

He nodded. "But I've torn it up, and if they want it, they'll have to ask for it. What a day it is! What a day! It smells good even out here."

"It's helped me to forget yesterday," she said.

He looked at his watch. "There are two hours of it left," he said. "Come. let's take a holiday."

She hesitated a moment. "We have no excuse for such a thing any more," she said.

"Not an excuse in the world," he answered, smiling. "Won't you come?"

Still she hesitated, though not as if in doubt. "Yes," she said.

HENRY KITCHELL WEBSTER, the author of "Calumet K" and "Roger Drake: Captain of Industry," was born at Evanston, Illinois, September 7, 1875, the son of TOWNER KEENEY and EMMA JOSEPHINE WEBSTER. After going through the preparatory schools of his native town, he graduated at Hamilton College, New York, in June, 1897. For a year he served as instructor in rhetoric at Union College, Schenectady. His very first story, "The Short-line War," which he wrote in collaboration with SAMUEL MERWIN, made a decided hit. Mr. WEBSTER had recognized the splendid literary material that was lying unused in the romance of business life in the United States; and he wrought it into the fabric of a vigorous and manly and spirited tale, which held the attention of his readers to the end. It was a new kind of fiction, written in a fresh and novel way, and it was bright and entertaining. "The Banker and the Bear: The Story of a Corner in Lard," followed in 1900, a year after

"The Short-line War"; and "Calumet K," the story of the building of a grain elevator, and what it meant to the people who built it against time and to the people who tried to prevent their finishing it, followed in 1901. Early in 1903 appeared "Roger Drake: Captain of Industry," which some excellent judges consider one of the best of recent stories for a man. Mr. WEBSTER was married on September 7, 1901, to Miss MARY WARD ORTH.

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